

Animals As Part of the Instructional Program/School Day/Activities

The purpose of this Policy is to have guidelines regarding the presence of non-service animals in school buildings and classrooms. (This includes “comfort” or “emotional support” animals.) The presence and use of live animals in schools can provide a variety to the learning experiences, create an environment of Social Emotional Learning, and can be an effective source of curricular enhancement. The following guidelines should be followed for animals (other than service animals) in schools or on School District property:

1. Animals can be allowed in schools if their presence enhances the educational experience.
2. Animals are not allowed to roam freely in the school. If the animal is a therapy dog, it must be under the control of the teacher or school employee through the use of a leash or other tether unless the use of a leash or other tether would interfere with the therapy dog’s safe, effective performance of its work or tasks. However, the therapy dog must be under the handler’s control at all times.
3. The animal(s) must not disrupt the educational process to any student, employee, or other person at school.
4. The Superintendent, appropriate building administrator or designee may approve the instructional purpose for each animal in the school. No animal may come into a school without prior approval. Therapy animals are solely for the benefit of students and are under the control of a designated staff member at all times.
5. Prior to introducing any animals into the classroom and at the beginning of each school year, designated staff shall ascertain that students and school personnel are not allergic to the animal(s) and the animal(s) will present no real or perceived physical danger to students or staff. In the event that a student or staff member is identified as having a potential allergic reaction, medical or emotional difficulty created by an animal in the school, the principal and teacher will take reasonable, appropriate steps to mitigate the potential adverse exposure. If reasonable accommodation is not feasible, the animal(s) will be prohibited and/or removed from the school.
6. Students should be instructed in the proper care and handling of the animals. No person should be allowed to mistreat an animal.
7. Should any person be injured, including but not limited to animal bites or scratches, associated with the handling of a classroom animal, the supervising teacher and/or dog handler are responsible for immediately reporting such event, in writing, to the building principal and assuring the student is directed to the school’s office for appropriate medical care. If appropriate, a district accident/injury report will be completed. The school’s personnel shall notify the student’s parent/guardian.
8. If appropriate, personnel shall notify public health officials.

9. At no time shall any student be exposed to an inherently dangerous animal or any animal which due to size, nature, or aggression could cause injury to a student.
10. Animals should be housed in suitable, sanitary self-contained enclosures appropriate to the type and size of the animal(s). Designated staff will be responsible for ensuring that animal enclosures are kept in a sanitary condition.
11. Animals generally should not be left in schools during holiday periods. Teachers should be responsible for making arrangements for their care. Where practical, and depending on the specific care needs and situation, a fish tank or similar enclosure may be an exception.
12. The animal(s) must be clean, well groomed, in good health, and house broken. If the animal is a therapy dog, it must be immunized against diseases common to dogs. Mammals brought to or kept at school must present evidence of annual health records. At the discretion of the building administrator, other animal species may or may not be required to have a health record.
13. Unless part of a supervised curricular enhancement or lesson, animals contemplated by this policy will not be allowed on playgrounds.
14. Therapy animals are not permitted in school cafeterias or other areas where food preparation or serving takes place.
15. If the animal is a dog, the dog handler must submit a copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on school property.

Requests to include animals in the instructional program of the classroom or school shall be approved by the Superintendent. The presence of animals must be balanced with health and safety issues for students, staff and the public.

Animals shall not be transported in a school vehicle without prior approval.

Animals that are part of the instructional program shall be certified under a Superintendent-approved therapy program.